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For Immediate Release  
November 30, 2005

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## **Senate committee passes welfare reform bills**

**LANSING** – Michigan’s welfare system will be strengthened under legislation approved today by the Senate Families and Human Services Committee, announced committee chairman Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood.

“We are providing individuals with more tools and resources to sustain employment and gain self-sufficiency,” Hardiman said. “This plan strengthens our current policies by increasing incentives and supports, but also calls for increased recipient accountability and sanctions.”

Key points of the welfare-reform legislation include:

- Focusing on early, more comprehensive assessments of recipients to determine their needs so they can receive the necessary education or training to become self-sufficient;
- Increased education and training opportunities – increasing education and training from 12 months to 24 months;
- Requiring that life-skills training be part of the orientation process and that it include classes about marriage, parenting and self-improvement, among others;
- Increasing sanctions for those who have not been adhering to the agreed plan, using a three-strike approach; and
- Elimination of automatic work deferment for Supplemental Security Income applicants.

A bipartisan Senate and House work group was named in October to examine Michigan’s welfare laws. Regulations dealing with welfare programs are set to expire at the end of the year and the legislation would extend the programs.

Senate Bills 892-894 now head to the full Senate for consideration.

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